

CIACO NID 81

September 26, 1981

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

POLAND: Solidarity's Congress

The second session of the Solidarity congress that opens today will be a crucial determinant of the union's future course. The radicals appear to have the momentum, but Solidarity leader Walesa and the moderates have a reasonable chance of containing their pressure. Even if the congress mixes moderation and militancy, the Soviets will continue to press the government. This will help intensify differences within the regime over strategy for dealing with the union.

The session, which is slated to last about a week, will have a much greater significance than the earlier gathering because it will set Solidarity's program and permanent national leadership. Although there will be great pressure to affirm some of the controversial resolutions tabled at the first session, they are not likely to be made an explicit part of the permanent program. On the key issue of organization, the delegates seem likely to support Walesa's efforts to grant considerable powers to the central leadership.

Debates will reflect the increased frustration and militancy among the workers. Many are unhappy that the first session of the congress bogged down in lengthy procedural wrangling and failed to address economic concerns. Several important regional chapters have instructed their delegates to take a hard line on these and other issues.

A key question will be how to respond to the tough positions adopted by Moscow and Warsaw. Their harsh statements have provoked a series of heated rejoinders from local and regional union chapters, and there will be strong pressure for the congress to enter the fray. The best the moderates probably can hope for is to tone down the language of any resolution.

Approved for Release
Date AUG 1999

311
322

September 26, 1981

The government's rhetoric also has led some union members to question continued cooperation with it. Some militants seem determined to push for a general strike or similar showdown to force the government to be more cooperative. According to one union official, the regime's offensive shows that it is "not scared enough" to listen seriously.

Other militants want the union to ignore the government and to take control over economic processes at the grass-roots level. The issue of worker self-management will thus be the major point of contention. Militants may feel betrayed by the Solidarity leadership's support for the compromise plan passed by parliament yesterday, and the moderates will have to use all their powers of persuasion to avoid its repudiation.

Several other emotionally charged issues may cause clashes between the moderates and the militants. For example, the recent arrests of Solidarity activists may result in calls for a general strike in retaliation. The strike yesterday by 5,000 to 7,000 miners in the south to protest a union official's arrest is indicative of this mood.

In addition, negotiations with the government over media access are at an impasse. There is sentiment for a radio and television strike.

Moderates' Strengths

The ability of the moderates to ride out this surge of militancy is enhanced by their apparent control of the resolutions drafting process. Militants will have to wage their battle from the floor.

Walesa himself is the moderates' other main asset. He remains the embodiment of Solidarity and is a charismatic leader capable of appealing to the rank and file over the heads of regional rivals. Although he will argue for unity and against provocation, he may have to commit himself to more militant positions than he prefers to get his way.

--continued

CIACO

NID 81

September 26, 1981

In recent weeks, however, Walesa has been generally quiet, and he may have to do some tough talking to shore up his image. One activist claims that Walesa increasingly is being compared to a "party hack" who keeps telling people why they cannot get what they want.

Likely Soviet Reaction

Soviet statements have made it clear that Moscow considers Solidarity's growing challenge to the regime--and particularly its appeal to the workers of Eastern Europe and the USSR--a threat to Soviet strategic interests and a violation of Poland's obligations under the Warsaw Pact. If the congress were again to throw down a direct challenge to the Soviets, Moscow would, at a minimum, intensify its pressure until Warsaw acts forcefully to curb the union. Although Moscow presumably recognizes that such action could provoke disorders that might ultimately require intervention, it appears willing to take this gamble.

Even if the congress takes a more ambiguous course, Moscow seems unlikely to return to its pre-congress policy this summer of allowing the regime considerable leeway. Moderation by Solidarity, however, probably will mean more measured Soviet pressure.

Any future expressions of militancy will prompt immediate Soviet demands that Warsaw punish the offenders. To encourage compliance by the regime, Moscow will keep alive the threat of economic sanctions and continue to cultivate potential hardline alternatives to the current Polish leaders.

Outlook

Even if the union moderates prevail at the congress, there will be enough of a show of militancy to keep tensions high. Divisions within the union and the regime will seriously complicate efforts by moderates on both sides to establish a modus vivendi. Meanwhile, continuing Soviet pressure will deny the Poles any significant breathing space.